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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION STATE OF THE UNION, IRAN-IAEA,  
HAMAS, HAITI-ARGENTINA; BUENOS AIRES 02/02/06

## 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's key stories focus on the State of the Union message, noting that Latin America is hardly mentioned; the complicated international scenario posed by President Ahmadinejad's challenges to the UNSC and the Western world; speculation about a possible truce between Hamas and Israel, and Argentina's key role in supporting Haiti's democracy and human rights.

## 2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "State of the Union: Latin America, Hardly Mentioned in Speech"

Ana Baron, center-left, leading "Clarín" Washington-based correspondent, says (02/02) "On very few occasions do U.S. Presidents mention our region in their traditional State of the Union speeches every year. George W. Bush wasn't an exception. However, the region was indirectly present.

"Weakened by a year of scandal and political setbacks, both on the international and domestic fronts, with his credibility at the lowest possible level, Bush didn't add anything new to his foreign policy. He dedicated most of his speech to Iraq and reiterated the arguments for exporting democracy to other countries, despite the victory of Hamas, and the defiant attitude of Iran's democratically elected president. What else could he do?

"However, on the domestic front, he urged to fight U.S. addiction to oil, betting on the search for alternate energy sources. This is truly new.

".... In his address, Bush didn't mention U.S. dependence on Venezuelan oil. But Republican senator McCain reiterated yesterday that the U.S. is not only dependent on Middle East oil, but also, on Venezuela.

".... Although Bush's plan to overcome U.S. 'energy addiction' was received with skepticism, undoubtedly, if he decided to implement it, some countries would benefit while others would suffer the consequences.

"Bush insisted on the need to establish a program for temporary employees while reinforcing borders. This proposal affects Mexico mainly because there are millions of Mexicans who cross the border illegally;

but there are also many Brazilians and Argentines who do the same."

- "Iran, One Step Away From UN"

Centrist, daily-of-record "La Nacion" says (02/02)  
".... Amid a toughened stance and Tehran's new challenges, the five permanent UNSC members will present a resolution at the IAEA with the purpose of informing the Security Council that Tehran isn't meeting its commitments.

"Even though this could be his last chance to avoid international sanctions, Iranian President Ahmadinejad yesterday renewed his defiant attitude and his threats to the Western world. He warned that he will 'resist those countries that intimidate him,' while one of his government officials confirmed Tehran will go ahead with uranium enrichment if the Iran case is sent to the UN.

".... According to a high-ranking U.S. State Department official, between 30 and 35 UN members will agree to send the Iran case to the Security Council. Cuba and Venezuela are expected to vote against the resolution.

"France, Germany, Great Britain and the U.S. push forward this initiative, given that UN inspectors have confirmed that Iran has a manual to build nuclear weapons, and that Tehran continues with its uranium enrichment process, while the Islamic regime says its program is only for peaceful purposes.

".... While Russian and Chinese diplomats made a last effort to convince the Iranian elite to yield,

Ahmadinejad said all accusations against his controversial nuclear program are false, and urged the world to avoid making 'a historic mistake' by taking the case to the UN.'..."

- "Disturbing Escalation"

Alberto R. Giavarini, former Foreign Minister of Argentina, opines in centrist, daily-of-record "La Nacion" (02/02) "The escalation of the conflict between Iran, the EU and the U.S. with the announcement to cancel the diplomatic alternative - if the IAEA takes the Iran conflict to the UNSC - must not be taken lightly or viewed as mere rhetoric.

"In addition to the underlying risk of rejecting international dialogue, made by Ahmadinejad's regime, the Iranian challenge clearly shows the magnitude and complexity of the scenarios in which the international community will have to move in the next few years.

"This leading case has several dimensions. First, it urges Western democracies and those countries that respect international legality to prudently assess the diplomatic options to solve the conflict in a way that satisfies all parties. This option must be evaluated mainly by the U.S. because it would force the Bush administration to accept the possibility that Russia's efforts - of a commercial and strategic interest in Iran --, in addition to those of the EU, with the lead of Great Britain, might succeed.

"Nevertheless, Tehran's veiled threat to increase international oil prices - if the crisis gets worse - and the perspective that the White House will have to negotiate under extreme pressure with the Iranian regime... pose a discouraging perspective.

"In view of this context, and in the long-run, the world must re-double efforts so that nuclear energy is a safe and viable option for all countries -- an

initiative that the U.S. and the EU have clearly decided to follow.

"In order to meet NPT goals and to allow those countries that already have nuclear capabilities - such as Argentina - not to lose their positions and, at the same time, enable other States to have fair access to nuclear energy, it's necessary for the IAEA, with UN collaboration, to take action in order to maintain the present division between those countries that supply nuclear services and those that receive them.

"Given that those countries which already reached the highest stages of nuclear services - such as Argentina - shouldn't set aside their efforts, while the rest also have the right to access the benefits of nuclear energy, long-term multilateral agreements ought to be outlined...."

- " Hamas Says it Might Discuss Truce with Israel "

Leading, center-left "Clarín" says (02/02) "While Europe, the U.S. and the NPA pressure Hamas to abandon violence and recognize Israel, a leader of that radical movement confirmed he's willing to discuss with the 'international community' the possibility of a truce with the Jewish State.

"A truce between Hamas and Israel 'is still an option and we might discuss that issue with the international community,' said Abu Marzuk in Damascus.

".... (But) Marzuk, member of the political bureau of the radical Islamic movement, said 'Hamas won't recognize the occupation. The Palestinian people aren't interested in negotiations because the power scale is different and because, so far, Israel hasn't recognized the rights of the Palestinian people.'

"These declarations add to the complex game of competing declarations between Hamas, the NPA, the Israeli government and the international community, which began a week ago after the surprise landslide victory of the radical movement in the Palestinian elections.

".... On Monday, another Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, urged the U.S., Russia, the EU and the UN to hold 'sincere and direct talks, without concessions.'

"In response, the four countries offered Hamas between two and three months to set aside violence and recognize the State of Israel. A proposal that was rejected by the radical group. All in all, despite this lukewarm progress and backtracking, the doors aren't completely closed...."

- "Options"

Pablo Ceron, leading, center-left "Clarín" international columnist, writes (02/02) "It's time for pragmatism in the Middle East. The abrupt change in the political scenario following Hamas' unexpected landslide victory imposes a new and unexpected dynamic in the region, where everything has a very precarious tint. The only possible option for the Islamic group to head a future Palestinian government is to moderate its extreme position vis--vis Israel. It's a second step. It already took the first one when it decided, for the first time since its creation in 1987, to access power via the ballot-boxes. The challenge to rule is very big. In addition to the sensitive political situation there's a deep economic crisis. Reality calls for a solution to problems, not to complicate them even further."

- "'Argentina Must Remain in Haiti'"

Leading, center-left "Clarín" runs an op-ed by Cesar Mayoral, Argentine representative at the UN, which says (02/02) ".... Argentina's participation in Haiti is positive because it prevented a bloodbath and stopped the country from becoming a dictatorship.

".... For Haiti to come out of its tragic situation isn't easy. MINUSTAH is there and Argentina is part of it to ensure the arrival of a democratic government that will begin the State's reconstruction, laying the foundations of development. Isolationism and 'leaving Haitians on their own' wouldn't help Haiti. On the contrary, reactionary forces would prevail. And this would show a complete lack of responsibility and hemispheric solidarity.

"This is why we believe Argentina must remain in Haiti a little longer, supporting the democratic process and respect for human rights.

".... Our country ought to play its role of regional stabilizer and defender of democracy and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean...."

13. To see more Buenos Aires reporting, visit our classified website at:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/buenosaires>

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